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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0024
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RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0280
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3853
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1693
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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6935
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4994
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3067
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4953
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4059
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9324
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6630
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1160
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3544
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#) [ECON](#)
SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 78

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Colombo 533 F) Colombo 529 G) Colombo 522 H) Colombo 519 I) Colombo
514 and previous

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa told Ambassador late on May 20 that the GSL was firm in its decision to restrict access by UN agencies and others to IDP camps. He criticized the UN and ICRC and said that they had to decide whether to remain in Sri Lanka to help IDPs. He stated that the GSL could provide for its own people. He claimed that there had been a low rate of civilian casualties in the final stages of the conflict. He requested USG assistance in procuring or leasing demining equipment. UN envoy Nambiar flew to the IDP camps and over the former conflict zone. The ICRC declined to participate since the flight would not land in the former conflict zone. The UN was optimistic about negotiations with GSL regarding the new access rules. The access restrictions prevented the setting up of several USAID/OFDA-funded health clinics. END SUMMARY.

BASIL FIRM ON CAMP ACCESS ISSUES

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador and USAID Country Director met with Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa late on May 20, pressing him on better access for UN, ICRC and NGOs to both the former conflict zone and the IDP camps. Rajapaksa replied at length that the access issues surrounding vehicle use inside the camps by UN and other INGO

personnel were not of concern to the GSL. He explained these new rules were the result of a week-long deliberation by GSL on how best to run the camps. Rajapaksa said they were instituted because doctors inside the camps had complained that dust and exhaust from passing vehicles were causing problems for the IDPs, and that instead GSL would arrange car parks outside the camps, and bicycles for aid workers to go inside the camps.

BASIL: UN AND OTHER INGOS FACE CHOICE

13. (SBU) Rajapaksa stated that the UN, ICRC and other INGOS were not fulfilling their duties of providing adequate food and supplies, and that the GSL was succeeding at this. He said the UN, ICRC and others would have to decide if they were operating in Sri Lanka to help the IDPs or to worry about their own operating rules. He expressed exasperation that the UN and INGOS were complaining about access, and said that GSL would not bow to pressure from outside "just because some aid worker in Vavuniya sent an SMS text message to someone in Geneva" to complain about something. Rajapaksa said the GSL appreciated that there were some international workers who were helpful, but that the GSL could care for its own people and did not actually need help from outside. He expressed satisfaction with the way USAID worked, however. The Ambassador pushed back, stressing that the role of the UN and ICRC in particular were essential, and encouraged Rajapaksa to work these issues out with the international organizations.

BASIL: DEMINING EQUIPMENT REQUESTED

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14. (SBU) Emphasizing the importance of rapid resettlement, Ambassador asked if there was an overall strategy for demining. Rajapaksa replied that what the GSL wanted most was assistance in obtaining de-mining equipment, preferably leased rather than purchased. He said the military had many soldiers available now, who should be provided with the proper equipment and put to work on demining. He asked if USG could provide demining equipment - not teams. The Ambassador said we would explore whether USG funding options could assist with that.

15. (SBU) Rajapaksa said that there was a process for prioritizing areas for demining, involving the Committee on Mine Action through the Ministry of Nation-Building, and that the GSL would follow the established procedure for approving demining projects in consultation with local authorities, the military and security forces. He said the authorities consult local village leaders as part of this process, including with those who may be currently in IDP camps, to determine the extent of knowledge of mine contamination and to determine which areas should be cleared first.

BASIL: PROUD OF LOW CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

16. (SBU) Rajapaksa said he was proud of the low numbers of civilian casualties in the concluding days of the fighting, saying that hostage situations usually end with much more death, and that the numbers killed and wounded were small in comparison to all the victims of the various LTTE bombing attacks on civilian targets over the years.

BASIL: IDPS WILL HAVE VOTE

17. (SBU) Ambassador stressed that when elections were held in the North that any IDPs remaining in camps would have to be included in the process. Rajapaksa reported that IDP committees were being appointed inside the camps, and that these appointees would receive a salary funded in part by UNHCR.

NAMBIAR VISITS IDP CAMPS AND
FORMER CONFLICT ZONE

¶18. (SBU) Vijay Nambiar, Chief of Staff to the UN Secretary General, accompanied by UN Resident Representative Neil Buhne, flew over the former safe zone on May 21, as low as tree top level, by military helicopter. Buhne reported to Charge that they saw no civilians in the area, only military. It is expected that the Secretary General will make a similar overflight on May 23. The government is reluctant to allow the SecGen to land in the zone.

¶19. (SBU) They also flew to Manik Farm on May 21, touring Zones 1 and 4, both of which are receiving new arrivals. UN Resident

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Representative Neil Buhne reported to Charge that in addition to "Zone 0," the government's preferred site to show visitors, Ban Ki Moon will visit Zone 4, including the health care facility, and will be allowed to converse with IDPs.

UN HOPEFUL ON IDP CAMP ACCESS TALKS

¶10. (SBU) Buhne reported that the UN has slowed down operations in Zones 1, 2, and 3 due to the disagreement with the government over vehicular access, but the UN continues to work in Zone 4. The UN will meet the evening of May 21 with Senior Presidential Adviser Basil Rajapaksa and Foreign Minister Bogollagama in an effort to reach agreement on vehicular access. The GSL's primary concerns regarding the volume of vehicles in Manik Farm are security (they argue that LTTE cadres could escape from the camps in the vehicles) and cultural sensitivity (they don't like the optic of large numbers of air conditioned vehicles driving through the camps while IDPs are out in the heat). Components of a compromise plan may, according to Buhne, include a log system for vehicles entering the camps, limiting the number of vehicles through carpooling, removing flags from the vehicles, and greater coordination with local authorities.

ICRC DONE IN NFZ AREA

¶11. (SBU) The ICRC was offered a place on Nambiar's flight over the former conflict zone, but turned it down because it would not give them access on the ground. Because of the repeated denial of access, they have been frustrated in all their attempts to carry out their mandate in the former NFZ. The ICRC told us he was nevertheless optimistic that talks with the GSL on access to IDP camps would reach an agreement. Charge updated Castella about Ambassador's conversation with Def Sec Gothabaya Rajapaksa on May 20, and Ambassador's advocacy for ICRC access. Castella thanked Charge for the USG's continuing support and assistance.

ACCESS RULES IMPEDING MEDICAL CARE

¶12. (U) The USAID/OFDA regional advisor reported that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has not been able to set up 6 of the 10 USAID/OFDA-funded health clinics due to new access restrictions at Manik farms camp site.

¶13. (U) On May 21, the USAID/OFDA regional advisor reported that the 16 expatriate staff from Doctors without Borders (MSF/France) waiting to set up a field hospital at Manik Farms have finally received their visas. The MSF staff began arriving on May 20. MSF will set up the field hospital across from Zone 2 of Manik Farms. The USAID/OFDA regional advisor noted that the staff will not have access to any of the zones.

MOORE